
MR. KEAN,
THE CELEBRATED TRAGEDIAN.

From the New Monthly Magazine.

MR. KEAN has not appeared, since our last, in the parts we intended to have noticed this month (*Bajazet* and the *Duke Aranza*) ; and as we wish to say something, as occasion offers, on each of his performances, we shall take this opportunity of speaking of his *Othello* ; first, however, endeavouring to remove an error which appears to exist as to the personal qualifications required in a representative of the Moor. From the days of Garrick to the present time, the name of *Othello* has conjured up a being endowed with every thing that is noble in feature, every thing that is graceful in demeanour, every thing that is grand and dignified in person ; in short, bating his colour, “ he looks an angel, and he moves a god.” What triumph would *Shakspeare* have achieved for his favourite passion in making his *Desdemona* love such a being ?—*Shakspeare* had a loftier object in view. He delighted to honour the female character ; and was it ever, before or since, so highly honoured as in his own *Desdemona* ?—Did fiction—even the fiction of *Shakspeare* itself,—ever embody a more perfect being ?—the perfection however, of nature, not of art.

Admitting then the face and person of *Mr. Kean* to be deficient in dignity, he is not thereby disqualified, in the slightest degree, as a representative of *Shakspeare's Othello*. The faults in his performance of that character—(we like to get rid of them first, that we may afterwards dwell with unmingled delight on its beauties)—the faults are a slight tincture of the mock heroic in what is called the level-speaking of the part ; (a fault, by the bye, which exists more or less in almost all his tragedy ;) and in his reproaches to *Desdemona* he sometimes assumes a cutting and sarcastic manner, which the words them-

selves do not warrant, and which is, besides, totally out of keeping with the rest of his conception of the part.

In the first and second acts there is nothing particularly striking ; for there is no necessity to make *Othello* “ a hero to his valet-de-chambre.” Except from this, however, the words “ if it were now to die, ’twere now to be most happy, &c. : ” mingled with the most soul-felt happiness, there is a beautiful expression of pathos which seems almost to forbode the misery that awaits him. — Of the third act it will be difficult to speak as we feel without incurring the imputation of extravagance. After having witnessed all the principal efforts of the histrionic art that have delighted the town for the last seven or eight years, not excepting those of *Mrs. Siddons*, we do not hesitate to say that for purity, delicacy, and high poetical beauty of conception—for truth, and depth, and variety of expression,—nothing has been exhibited which equals the whole of the third act of *Mr. Kean's Othello*. Never were the workings of the human heart more successfully laid open. During the first scene, in which *Iago* excites his jealousy, in every tone of the voice, in every movement of the face and body, may be seen the accumulated agonies of unbounded love, struggling with, and at length yielding to doubt. When the simple exclamation, “ And so she did,” bursts from him, in reply to *Iago's* suggestion that *Desdemona* had “ deceived her father,”—in an instant the tumult of thoughts that has been passing across his mind during the long pause that preceded it is manifest—The next scene where he enters after having been meditating on his supposed wrongs begins with a burst of mingled agony and rage : the intenseness of expression

thrown into the words "I found not Cassio's kisses on her lips," has never been surpassed. Then comes the utter heart-sinking and helplessness which inevitably succeeds to the protracted operation of powerful passion: the beautiful speech beginning—"Oh! now for ever farewell, &c." is given in a tone of the most melting pathos—it is the quiet despair of a man who has for a moment cast his miseries behind him, and contemplates them as having happened in years past—it is the death-dirge of departed bliss: mournful music, but yet "music." To this calm succeeds a storm of contending passions—rage, hatred, intervening doubts,—until at length the whole of his already excited energies are yielded up to revenge: the look and action accompanying the words—"O blood! Iago—blood!" were most appalling. We repeat that the third act of Mr. Kean's Othello is the noblest performance on the English stage.

There is a quietness about the last scenes of it which is beautifully consistent with the manner of giving the speech—"Oh now for ever, &c." All is the dead calm of a midnight sea;—passion seems to have "raved itself to rest;" even when Othello learns too late that his wife was guiltless, it scarcely moves him: one imagines that he had before determined not to live, and that the only change wrought by this certainty of her innocence is, that whereas before he would have sought death as a refuge from utter despair—now "'tis happiness to die," for amid the surrounding gloom there is one bright spot to which he can turn—she *did* love him, and the devotion of his heart was not cast away.

On the 20th (June) we witnessed the representation of Othello, by Kean, with renewed delight. Our sentiments upon his personation of the "ensnared" Moor, have been before fully stated. We have remarked on the pathos that this great actor often diffuses in a single word. In addition to the examples already noticed, we cannot forbear advertising to the manner in which after Iago has infused the poison of jealousy into his mind, and, perceiving his agitation—observes, "I see this hath dashed your spirits,"—Othello replies, "Not a jot,

not a jot!" The look of anguish, the closing of the eyes, as if to restrain the tears wrung from his tortured soul, and the affected carelessness of tone must be witnessed by those who would appreciate their effect. In the line, "I found not Cassio's kisses on her lips," the pause which is introduced before the word *kisses*, as if his tongue revolted from the task of expressing the odious thought, is another of those beautiful touches which render the whole of the third act of this tragedy, in Mr. Kean's hands, one of the most horribly beautiful, and impressive exhibitions that the histrionic art can boast of. Neither do we know of any actor, whose countenance is capable of such expression as Kean's. He has been censured for want of dignity; but we apprehend that whatever degree his features might gain of the latter quality, they would lose in a like ratio of the former, which gives such powerful effect to the portraiture of this performer. The want of this expression, in our idea, renders Pope an unsuitable representative of the wily and dangerous Iago. On this subject our great poet proved his knowledge of nature, when he put into Cæsar's mouth this wish:—

Let me have men about me that are fat,
Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o' nights;
Yon Cassius has a lean and hungry look;
He thinks too much--such men are dangerous.

Massinger's admirable comedy of *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, has been revived at this theatre. Mr. Kean played Sir Giles Overreach.* This character is drawn with great power and originality. It begins in avarice—reckless, remorseless avarice; which at length becomes merged and extinguished in intense personal vanity. He first gluts himself with wealth till his very wishes can compass no more; and then, by dint of gazing at himself—as the creator of his boundless stores, his avarice changes into self-admiration; and he thenceforth lavishes as eagerly to gratify the new passion, as he

* The character of Sir Giles Mompesson, who lived in the time of Massinger, probably suggested to him the hint of his Sir Giles Overreach; though it is certainly not drawn from that person.—For some account of him, see Wilson's *Life and Reign of James I.* 1621.

had amassed to gratify the old one. To the unmingled wickedness of this character we have a pleasing and a needful contrast, in the simple loves of Allworth and Margaret; and Wellborn is drawn with great freedom and spirit.

But to speak of Mr. Kean's inimitable performance of Sir Giles Overreach. If it is not his very best, (for we still think his *Othello* and his *Richard II.* exhibit powers of a loftier description,) yet we cannot call it *second* to any; because these performances, as well as his *Richard III.* have faults: but this is absolutely perfect. We could scarcely look at it as a stage representation. In the first part of the play nothing can be more true to nature, and at the same time more refined and original, than the mixture of gloom and vulgarity which Mr. Kean casts over the looks, tone, and action of the fearless and successful villain. The fine scene with his daughter in the third act was most exquisitely performed; particularly the fiend-like expression with which he tells her to "trample on" the Lady Downfallen; and the savage energy with which he gives the speech, "How! forsake thee!" &c. Then comes his feigned humility with "the Lord," as he calls him,—always in a tone of half-contempt, even when speaking to him. Indeed all through the play his half-contemptuous and sarcastic manner of pronouncing "lord," and "honourable, right honourable daughter," is peculiarly striking.

The last act is from beginning to end a storm of the most intense and various passion, occasionally hushed for a mo-

ment into a calm not less dreadful; as when all his energies seem at once to crack, and hardly leave him strength to articulate "My brain turns;" and again when he is about to rush among his enemies, but stops short as if struck with death—"Ha! I am feeble," &c. We must not neglect to notice his exquisite manner of calling Marall to him, after he discovers the blank parchment instead of the deed which secured Wellborn's property to him. He first calls him in his usual tone, as if speaking to his slave, "Marall!" but he instantly recollects the stake that depends on Marall's services at the moment, and he again calls him—"Marall!" but with an expression of face and voice that we should scarcely have thought possible to throw into a single word. This is wholly Mr. Kean's own, the name being only given once in Massinger. To describe the awful and terrific appearance of his countenance when borne off the stage is impossible. To be appreciated it must be seen—the effects of it manifested in hysteric sobs, were not confined to the audience alone; Mrs. Glover and Mrs. Horn were so much affected that the former actually sunk into a chair on the stage. So deeply indeed were the performers impressed with the transcendent merit which Mr. Kean had displayed in this character, that, after the first representation, before they separated, they resolved to raise a subscription for a piece of plate to be presented to him, as a token of their admiration. Lord Byron, with his usual liberality, contributed 25 guineas to the fund destined for this purpose. July, 1816.

THE DRAMA.

KEAN AND SHERIDAN.

MR. Sheridan was so much offended at being excluded from any concern in the rebuilding of Drury Lane Theatre after the fire, that he made a resolution never to enter it, from which he did not deviate till a few months before his death. When Mr. Kean came out, however, and his extraordinary talents became the universal topic of conversation and admiration, Mr. Sheridan was impressed with an eager curiosity to see him. Yet, faithful to his resolution, he could not be prevailed on to witness his dramatic exertions; he would see Mr. Kean, but he would not see Richard, Shylock, Othello. One day, when Mr. Kean was to perform, he was invited first to dine with Mr. Sheridan, and an intimate friend of his deeply concerned in the Theatre, at a neighbouring tavern. They sat for two hours, when Mr. Kean was obliged to leave the party, and attend his professional duty; but such was the interest excited in Mr. Sheridan's mind, by this new dramatic meteor, that during the whole time he staid, his attention was entirely rivetted upon him, he studied his every look, his every word, his every gesture, nor did he drink even a single glass of wine. "Mr. Kean," said Mr. Sheridan's friend, in relating the anecdote, "may boast of having done what no other man ever could do, of having even charmed Sheridan's attention away from his bottle!" When Mr. Kean was gone, Mr. Sheridan said, "what salary do you give that man?" "Fifteen pounds a week," was the reply.—"Tis a shame," he said, "he ought, at least, to have double that sum; take my word, you have got a treasure, he will be the salvation and support of your Theatre."—Mr. Sheridan at length could no longer resist the attraction of Mr. Kean's talents, but did go to the theatre to see his performance of Sir Giles Overreach, of which he thought so highly, that he said—"There is mind indeed! those are tal-

ents, that can never fail, but must ever be more and more admired, the more they are known."—*Lit. Gaz. for Feb.*

KEMBLE.

A PUBLIC notice, before the late opening of Covent Garden Theatre, announced the intention of John Kemble to go through the range of his characters this season, and then take leave of the stage forever. There is something in the words *forever*, which lays a strong hold on the heart. The retirement of a favorite performer, in the evening of life, is productive of so many interesting recollections, that it has always been contemplated by the public with regret. We are not surprised that the approaching retirement of so eminent a tragedian, has excited a more than usual sensation among the lovers of the drama. His classic attainments as a scholar, and demeanor as a gentleman, have added to the general esteem of his character. Commencing our publication at the moment, when we are about to lose this distinguished performer, it becomes an anxious pleasure to analyse his style and powers as a great Histrionic Artist; the publicity of his life having superseded the necessity of biographical details. Before we begin our view, we have to remove some crude opinions calculated to interfere with our object; as a traveller, who would approach a noble edifice, must free his path from interfering obstacles. We should be happy, if our limits permitted us, to draw by analogy, from first principles and celebrated examples, an illustration of his physical and mental powers; and endeavour to measure his merits by showing their deep foundation in nature, and the degree of their similitude to the highest performance of Genius in the Sister Arts.

Like all other eminent men, Kemble has been the subject of much applause and envy. In forming our estimate, we shall detach ourselves from local and temporary interests, and judge of him

by himself, by comparison, and by public opinion in its purest channels. In this immense capital, where the contest for public favour is confined to two great Theatres only, the rival proprietors, and their circle of friends, however honorable, are perhaps too closely committed in a strife of personal interests, to judge or speak with perfect impartiality. Without being sensible of their leaning, the most upright are biassed, when delivering an opinion for or against their own concerns. To the spirit of honest pride, which heats the mind in all contests for superiority, the spirit of gain adds its less scrupulous and more powerful influence. When the rage of adventure has greatly multiplied proprietors, their efforts to obtain, what may be termed the *run of the market*, in favour of their own actors, has a tendency to corrupt the public taste. The merits of performers are overrated, and their palpable defects not unfrequently made the subject of extravagant commendation. Some of the periodical journals and diurnal Critics are engaged as auxiliaries, so that the columns of a newspaper, are, sometimes, no very faithful guide to the opinion of the public. Mrs. Siddons, Miss O'Neil, Kean and Kemble, have been thus, at random, praised and censured.

An eminent tragedian, besides the advantage of a classical education, requires a noble exterior, and Kemble possesses this requisite in a superior degree. The personal disadvantages of a dwarfish and deformed Poet, Painter, and Sculptor, as in the instances of Pope and Bamboccio, cast no veil over the fine qualities of their minds. The men and their merits are distinct; and we judge of their genius in their works, without ever having seen, or thought, of their persons. But the merits of an Actor are identified with his person; they live and die together. Unlike other imitative Artists, his personal endowments are of the first importance because they come first under the eye; and the man, himself, is the mirror through which his talents or the merits of his mind are seen. If we did not every day bear the opposite maintained, it would appear idle to observe, that he who has to personate a hero, a monarch,

or a fine gentleman ought to possess a person and countenance, in conformity with each of these characters.

If there be not this conformity, there can be no perfect illusion; although there may be great powers of genius: and an audience may be highly gratified, by a display of impassioned energy and much knowledge of human nature. The Actor may excite powerful sympathies in characters of fiery vehemence; but he cannot do justice to his own conceptions, where grandeur and majesty are required. However just his feelings and ideas may be, they are seen like a fine picture, through an opaque and discoloured glass. In the high class of Grecian and Roman characters, no vigor of conception or feeling can altogether atone for meanness of figure and countenance. Intending to follow up, in the succeeding numbers of this publication our notice of Kemble with a similar review of that admirable performer Kean, of Mrs. Siddons, Miss O'Neil, Mr. M'Cready, and the whole strength of the two Theatres, these remarks are necessary in the outset, to oppose some prejudices, which have arisen from a want of a due consideration on the subject.

The causes, which govern the affections and sympathies in private life, operate with more influence on the public stage. We agree with lord Chesterfield, that a good person and countenance are the best letter of recommendation, which nature can bestow. They ensure the bearer a good reception in all countries. Notwithstanding this natural effect from natural causes has prevailed in all ages, some Critics have endeavoured to reason us out of these feelings. In their estimate of Actors, they seem to hold a good or bad face or person as objects of secondary and small consequence. They place their whole stress upon the words "*great nature*," "*strikingly natural*," or "*naturalness*," by which they imply their notion of a *near resemblance to every-day nature*. This, in their judgment, is the chief merit of a great Actor. But the finest form and face, and those which are least favored, an admirable Crichton and an Æsop, are equally the work of Nature: so far their looks, gestures, and movements are equally

natural; and in the expression of the passions, the latter is frequently more violent, or as they term it, more *striking* than the former. But no person will say that they are equally capable of exciting our sympathies, or equally impressive. It is not therefore the mere circumstance of an actor's being, in the ordinary sense, more strikingly natural, which produces the difference in our feelings. It is, as in the case of Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, the superior nobleness, grace, and grandeur of form and face, which enable one to exercise a higher dominion over our senses; and render him, with even no higher mental powers or feelings, a superior organ of effect.

The powerful impression of personal advantages, renders the study of superior forms a first principle, as a primary instrument of effect in all the imitative arts. Homer confers upon Achilles, as his principal character, loftiness of form, masculine beauty, vigor, and martial grace. Virgil clothes Æneas in majesty of the highest degree. Milton has, even, represented Satan, in faded grandeur, "like the Sun shorn of his beams." Longinus considers grandeur and nobleness, as the first source of the sublime, and the most rare and highest excellence of a Poet. The ancient Poets, Painters, and Sculptors, spent their lives in attaining this envied excellence. Their works are immortalised, not so much by those strong and violent gestures and action, which are in our time termed "*strikingly natural*," as by their *general resemblance to nature*, their majesty and beauty of form and face. Our great Dramatic Poet has strikingly exemplified his opinion of personal advantages, in Hamlet's comparison of his father and uncle to his mother. Shakspeare did not confine the reprehension to the moral guilt of her crime. The son appeals to the evidence of her eyes, to prove that she had sinned against all rule of nature and sense, in her preference of the inferior figure and face of his uncle to the "*grace—combination—majestical, fair, and warlike form*" of his father.

Kemble's voice was not naturally strong, but it was of a mellow, manly tone, and he has given it a great compass by practice. He possesses that no-

bleness and grandeur of form and face, which, combined with a just conception and powerful feelings, constitute the primary qualification of a Tragedian of the highest class. It may be termed the *Gold of Nature*; that is, the purest organ or basis, for the exhibition of passion, expression and character. Compared with it, inferior forms, even when equal in conception and feeling, are but as *Silver*; and so on, to the meaner metals, in proportion as they sink below the standard or first order. Kemble's rank in the first class, where he has had so very few rivals, was fixed by nature. No person considers a fine medal in *brass*, of equal value to one in *silver*, or one in *silver* equal to one in *gold*, although all equally brilliant in point of impression, and struck from the same die. There is a union of strength and symmetry in his figure; a flowing largeness in the outline of his person; and a fine accord of all the parts, the essential of grandeur, in the whole. The same character of majesty is stamped on his countenance. The breadth of his forehead, and dignified elevation of his brow, are suited to command. This impression of royalty is well sustained by the volume of thought and fiery meaning of his eye. The aquiline boldness of his nose, the expression of his mouth and line of his chin, form a noble contour. There is a masculine prominence in his features; but their boldness is harmonized by their perfect unison with each other. In the countenance of his celebrated competitor, COOKE, the features, although all separately fine, were not in such fortunate accord. The bold line of his aquiline nose, and manly projection of his chin, were somewhat too large for his remaining features. This disproportion, with the low of his brow, construction of his body, stormy power of his voice, and coarse turn of his mind, enabled him to throw a tremendous depth of expression into characters of a plotting, guilty, and ferocious cast. With these unenviable requisites, and a strong conception of his author, it is no injustice to admit that in the remorseless mind and peculiar person of the tyrant Richard, he came, perhaps, somewhat nearer the mark, at least he gave a darker shadowing to the picture than Kemble has done. The education

of the latter, his natural and acquired endowments ; his honorable ambition ; his association with persons of high rank ; and all the whole frame of his mind, have qualified him for the high department in which he has shone for thirty-four years on the London stage. His *Coriolanus*, *Brutus*, and *Cato*, are acknowledged to be not only the most just and classic, but the grandest representations of the Roman character ever exhibited on the British, or on any modern stage. His *Alexander* displayed the fiery vain-glory and extravagant grandeur of mad *Lee's* ranting original. His *King John*, *Macbeth*, and *Lear*, showed all the varied shades and admirable discrimination, with which Shakspeare separated these characters ; and gave to each its distinctive features of subtlety, guilt, weakness, grief, madness, and kingly elevation. His *Hamlet* was a masterpiece of sentiment and noble bearing : his *Wolsey* a fine representation of wounded pride and disappointed ambition ; fallen, but dignified and chastened by affecting touches of solemnity and sadness. The correct arrangement of the cardinal's costume, the calm impressive melancholy look ; the venerable style of bending loftiness in the whole figure, can never be forgotten. Of many of these characters he may be justly said to be the only legitimate representative ; some, it is to be feared, and those of the highest class, will die with him. But as he descended nearer to the level of every-day life, he has found competitors, and some on equal terms. The melancholy abstraction of his *Penruddock* and *Stranger*, and the pathetic insanity of his *Octavian* never failed of their due impression. That a great man like *Kemble* should have attempted characters, for which his powers were not altogether suited, is not an unusual circumstance. When young, he performed *Othello* and *Romeo*, but fell below himself in these characters. He also made some attempts in genteel comedy, but his performance wanted the gliding easy demeanour of modern life. That he seriously meditated on *Falstaff* may well be doubted. Neither our intentions nor our limits permit a notice of all his characters even by name, we shall therefore briefly conclude the present article, by observing that he has been equalled in his time, by *Henderson*, *Cooke*, and *Kean* only. These great actors, in some parts of certain characters, have surpassed him. But, "take him for all in all," we fear, after we have lost him, that it will be long before we shall look upon his like again.—*Ibid.*

EDMUND KEAN,

OF THE THEATRE-ROYAL, DRURY-LANE.

MR. KEAN was born in 1789. His father was an architect, and a man of considerable talent ; he was distinguished in the debating clubs of that day, as an elegant speaker and sound reasoner. His mother was a daughter of the well known *George Saville Carey*. Mr. Kean had the benefit of instruction at *Eton*, and continued there, we understand, more than three years.

Family circumstances, however, rendered him familiar with the stage from his earliest life. He made his debut at

the very tender age of three years, as a *Sleeping Cupid* in *Cymon* ; whether the plaudits he received in this character fired his youthful soul, we cannot say ; but when he arrived at the maturer age of six, we find him acting a more important part, that of one of *Falstaff's* pages, at *Drury-lane*. He was remarked at this time by the Performers to be a child of uncommon abilities ; and, influenced, perhaps, by the specimens of mimicry which he had observed in his uncle (the famous *Moses Kean*, so well

known as a Ventriloquist), he was in the habit of delivering various speeches from Richard, Lear, &c. in the manner of the most admired actors.

It was after this that he was placed at that seminary to which we have alluded; but while still a youth, in fact a mere boy, he returned to the stage, and performed in many subordinate parts at the Haymarket. He now adopted the profession of an Actor, and accepted of various provincial engagements; and, having become a member of a company that went to Exeter, Teignmouth, Dorchester, &c. his abilities became exposed to the observation of good judges, excited interest, and attracted attention. Soon after the present Drury-lane Theatre was opened, Mr. Kean addressed the committee, requesting an engagement, but was informed the establishment was filled up. He was thus for the time disappointed in his wish to tread the London Boards in a more exalted walk than he had before occupied. Still, however, he went on increasing the admiration, and adding to the number of his friends; and, at length, Dr. Drury, of Teignmouth, addressed Pascoe Grenfell, Esq. M.P. stating that his great merits were in a manner lost for want of a fit opportunity to shew themselves, and urging him to contribute his assistance in the laudable effort of removing them to a larger sphere of action. Mr. Grenfell spoke to Mr. Whitbread, and such interest soon accomplished what the unsupported solicitations of Mr. Kean himself failed to effect.

Mr. Kean's first attempt, in consequence of his engagement at Drury Lane, was, the part of Shylock. He gave great satisfaction to the few who saw him. His merits, however, became more and more buzzed about; and his first performance of Richard the Third was to a full house, and drew forth applause as unusual as the talents that excited it. We shall merely observe, that his scene with Lady Anne, and his dying scene, were deemed prodigies of excellence. It was this night which crowned his wishes, and redeemed the Theatre in which he performed from the ruin that threatened it. The Committee, fully sensible of the treasure they had gained, cancelled their original

agreement with him, and concluded one for five years, at a salary for the first year of sixteen pounds per week, to be increased for the second to eighteen pounds, and for the three last years to twenty pounds per week, with a benefit each season. They further made him a present of a hundred guineas. They have no reason to regret their liberality (which certainly does them credit), for their house fills on the night of Mr. Kean's performing in a manner unparalleled in the former history of either house. The present Drury Lane Theatre was built to hold about six hundred and thirty pounds, but Mr. Kean usually returns nearly seven hundred into the treasury.

Mr. Kean was married at an early age to a young lady from Ireland, who is now living to enjoy her husband's fame and prosperity: they have had two children, one of whom died at an early age. Mr. Kean's person is very small, considerably under the middle height, his voice not prepossessing; yet with these disadvantages did he give a high interest to his performance, and excite those emotions which we ever feel at the presence of genius; that is, the union of good powers with fine sensibility: it was this gave fire to his eye, energy to his tones, and such a variety to all his gestures, that one might almost say, "his body thought." An eminent theatrical critic observes, that the Shylock of Mr. Kean has not the vehement force of Mr. Cooke; yet, as a whole, it was little inferior, and in one or two passages the debutant struck out beauties perfectly original. Mr. Kean did not possess the same boldness of sketch, but he gave some touches that declared the master artist. In the scene where the pretended judge asks to look at the bond, we could not but admire the eagerness with which Mr. Kean perused the face of the supposed lawyer; while he read over the instrument, his eye fairly reeled with joy. His conception of the speech,

"An oath, an oath, I have an oath in heaven;
Shall I lay perjury on my soul?"

was new and excellent. He delivered the passage in a tone and humour bordering on the ludicrous: it was the bitter ironical joke of a man sure of his darling purpose, and, as he thought, just

about to triumph in his iniquity. The next touch was even better—Portia tells Shylock to procure a surgeon for Antonio; Shylock asks if it is so expressed in the bond; Portia allows that it is not, but advises him to do it for charity; Shylock looks at the bond, and answers,

“I cannot find it, ’tis not in the bond!”

which he delivered with a transported chuckle, different from Mr. Cooke and other performers, who always uttered it with a savage sneer; his inmost heart seemed to laugh, that no obstacle now remained to the completion of his murderous purpose. This was a fine touch of nature.

The full force of Shakspeare’s mind seems to have been portrayed by Mr. Kean in the character of Richard; indeed, we should think that none but a man of kindred intellect could give an adequate image of such a model: this, however, Mr. Kean has done: he had not been on the stage two minutes, nor repeated half a dozen lines, before there was an universal feeling, that no common being had come forward to challenge our attention; there was no mock heroic in his acting: his death scene was the grandest conception, and executed in the most impressive manner; he fights desperately, he is disarmed, exhausted of all bodily strength, he disdains to fall, and his strong volition keeps him standing; he fixes his head, full of intellectual and heroic power, directly on his enemy; he bears up his chest with an expansion which seems swelling with more than human spirit; but he is only man, and he falls, after this sublime effort, senseless to the ground.

He played the part of Hamlet to the understanding, and not to the eye: he never forgot that he was personating a philosophic prince, so immersed in the depth of melancholy reflections as to become indifferent to all earthly matters, except his revenge, and at last to be careless even about that.

He came on the stage with slow steps, and a fixed sorrow on his countenance; and repeated the famous soliloquy on death in a tone of pathos that touched every heart. He looks about for reasons to justify the execution of his wish for suicide; and, in the eloquence of an abundant sorrow, soon shews ample

cause; but the power of his intellect is too great to be subdued by passions, and he sets in array all those arguments which withheld the wretch from dying: still, however, clinging to the miserable side of the subject, with a tenacity which marks both the intensity of his grief, and his severe regret that he must not touch the forbidden land: in this state of mind he turns round and sees Ophelia; he is surprised and vexed that he has been overheard; but his thoughts are too much elevated for bitterness or piquet, and he addresses her as so pure a being ought to be addressed. Mr. Kean treated her with mournful gravity, and not with noisy railing; and, at the end, as he was leaving her, afraid that even this treatment had been unkind, he returned to her with the humility of a man who thinks he has offended a virtuous being, and kisses her hand; at once to re-assure her, and to vindicate himself. This noble touch was applauded to the very echo. The scene with his mother was managed with equal talent; we, therefore, will undertake to promise him, that his fame shall last as long as the heart of man shall beat in response to the appeal of nature.

There is a coarseness in his voice, on some occasions, that is unfavourable to him, because he is forced to labour against it; and his exertions, thus forced, produce a sententiousness and formality, from which, at other times, he is altogether free.

His success at Drury-lane, we are told, has been such as to induce the managers to double his salary, besides having presented him with 100*l*. The attraction of Mr. Kean at Drury-lane has set the Covent-garden managers on the alert. Mr. Young has been started against Mr. Kean in the characters of *Richard*,* and *Hamlet*; and the public are likely to derive much pleasure from the spirit of competition that has been aroused.

* At both theatres an improvement has been made in the Tent-scene; instead of the old and bad custom of introducing the ghosts of Henry, Lady Anne, and the children, to Richard, through the noisy traps, is now substituted their appearance through a far more imposing medium; they are discovered in a kind of blue mist, which gives them a truly supernatural appearance. The managers are entitled to much praise for the good effect produced by this alteration.

 THE DRAMA.

From the New Monthly Magazine.

Mr. Editor,

THE astonishing ability shown by Mr. Kean in those particular characters that call forth the natural energies of this great actor, is a subject that must always interest while the British stage continued to possess its present influence over the manners and conduct of society. That a man so little physically gifted by nature, as respects voice and person, should thus command universal attention, and receive the plaudits of admiring thousands, is a demonstrative proof of the undeniable merit that he must possess; and whatever the envious part of mankind (for envy it must be) may assert in contradiction to this statement, I must frankly confess, that no actor since the days of Garrick has so justly elicited the notice of the public by his wonderful powers. It is my intention, Sir, with your permission, to dilate a little upon this subject, for the purpose of proving him one of those extraordinary men that are so rarely seen, and who, when they do appear shed a brilliancy that the lapse of ages cannot extinguish. His peculiar power of electrifying his audience by one of those sudden starts and bursts of passion which come home to the feelings of every human being and cause us almost involuntarily to rise and applaud: if this be not a strong proof of his ability, by what criterion are we to judge of the merits of an actor? But we need not be astonished, when even the immortal Roscius that preceded him had enemies daring enough to depreciate his unrivalled performance. How much more has Kean then to contend against, when it is considered that nature has not bestowed upon him those external qualifications that other performers, at various periods, have so pre-eminently possessed! It is truly gratifying to think that Kean has so completely surmounted these defects by the transcendent efforts

Q *Eng. Mag.* Vol. I.

of his powerful intellect. What man is there that can (impartially speaking) deny him merit; and that of the highest kind? He is not one of those meteors who for a short period dazzle with their brilliancy and then are seen no more; his fame rests upon the strong and immutable basis of public opinion, against whose judgment there is no appeal. He has now, I believe, been nearly four years before a British audience, and is still followed by all the real lovers of good acting: those who admire the true school of nature (in opposition to the more laborious acting of John Kemble) will find a most excellent transcript of it in Mr. Kean's performance. It has been remarked by some of his opponents, that there wants variety in his performance—in short, that his acting is of too confined a nature, and that he only occasionally shows the actor in the more violent tumults and agitations of the soul. That he does not possess that universality and equality in his performance which so much distinguished his great predecessor, I am ready to allow; but in those particular traits, where the hidden and more malignant passions of the soul are suddenly and unexpectedly to be called into action, it is that Kean shines out above all his competitors: none then can excel him—he reigns triumphant; all criticism becomes superfluous—the feelings stamped upon the human heart are the best and only true testimonies in his favour that can never err. I have seen him in most of those characters that have contributed so much to his present fame, and in others, which, for the credit of the managers as well as Mr. Kean, might have been omitted;—but in all he has shown in a greater or a less degree, the wonderful powers with which nature had gifted him.—His Sir Giles Overreach and Richard III. may be considered as *chef-d'œuvre*. He has still one aduious performance

to attempt, that of *King Lear*, which doubtless will excite the universal attention of the dramatic world; these are parts in that tragedy which are peculiarly calculated to elicit those dormant powers which we so frequently see in Kean's performance, till some unexpected event brings them forth to the admiring multitude. It would be invidious at present to make any particular remarks on the comparative merits of Kean and Booth. The latter certainly is a very clever young man; which is a sufficient plea for him to obtain the patronage of the public, but it is an absurdity to place him on an equality with an actor whom it is impossible for him ever to rival. It has been asserted that Booth is a

strong imitator of Kean—this may be true; but let it be recollected, that no man was ever great by imitation. Mr. Booth's recent performance in Shakespeare's admirable play of *Cymbeline* was strongly corroborative of the above remarks:—he had evidently studied him deeply; for though Kean has not performed this identical character himself, yet others which he has played were so similar, (his *Iago*, for instance,) that every motion of Booth's was an attempted imitation of Kean's manner.

A part of your excellent publication being particularly devoted to the drama, I am induced to send the above remarks for insertion in your truly liberal pages.

Holloway, March 20, 1817. J. D.

THE DRAMA.

From the European Magazine.

DRURY-LANE, MAY, 1817.

MAY 14th, 1817, Mr. Kean made his first appearance in the character of Eustache de St. Pierre, in Colman's historical play of *The Surrender of Calais*. We shall not stop to examine whether the author has raised in this drama a superstructure worthy of the noble foundation furnished by history: our business here is with those by whom the characters of the piece, such as it is, were personated. The excellence of Kean as its hero adds if possible, to his former reputation. The cynic, the warm patriot, and the father were alternately portrayed by him with a force and fidelity which irresistibly claimed the heartfelt applause of the audience. His rebuke of the mutinous citizens; his commiseration of the distress of his old townsman to whom he gives his last morsel; his reproaches of his son who proposes to secrete provisions for themselves; his offer of himself as the first victim to save his fellow-citizens; and his ironical address to the King at the place of execution, were passages that demanded particular approbation.

The *Macbeth* of Mr. Kean has afforded an excellent opportunity for the display of his peculiar abilities—or at least in the way in which he performs this character. In the dignity and majesty of the character, he is evidently not equal to Kemble. In the passion, and ardour, and inspiration, he greatly excels him. We think, however, that in one instance he was deficient of a proper understanding of his author, or rather of a peculiar feeling of the mind, and of the expression of that feeling in a particular scene. In the banquet scene *Macbeth* is struck with horror, not indignation, at the appearance of the ghost of the murdered *Banquo*. He forgets the prejudice of every one and every thing but the object of his terror, and disturbs the feast "with most admired disorder." *Lady Macbeth* hastily dismisses her guests, and then seizing the arm of her husband, reproves

him, at least by a look and attitude, for his imprudent self discovery. *Macbeth* answers her, "As I stand here, I saw him." This is spoken under the continuance of the same impression of horror, but upon the point of recovery. Kean did not give this part in its proper spirit, and we think he was decidedly wrong. There are two things which are required to constitute an excellent actor—judgment and natural powers; the knowledge of what he has to do, and the physical faculties of doing it.

COVENT GARDEN.

On the 3d of May, *The Apostate*, a tragedy from the pen of Mr. Shell, was performed for the first time. The scene is laid at Grenada, in Spain, during the reign of Philip II. The piece opens with the entrance of Hemeya, (C. Kemble) the heir of the Moorish Kings, with two of his friends, who endeavour to rouse him to a sense of the wrongs of his oppressed nation. He deploras their hopeless condition and his own; avows his love for Florinda, (Miss O'Neill) the daughter of Count Alvarez, (Murray) and his despair at the encouragement given by her father to the suit of Pescara, (Macready) governor of Grenada. The mansion of Alvarez suddenly takes fire; he vows to give his daughter and fortune to the man who shall save her. Hemeya ignorant of this promise, rushes through the flames and bears the swooning Florinda in safety to the gardens of the castle, where love and gratitude break the bonds of maiden reserve, and she acknowledges the passion which she had long secretly cherished for her deliverer. Scarcely has Alvarez, in fulfilment of his own oath joined the hands of the lovers, when Count Pescara enters and produces a royal edict forbidding upon pain of death any Moor to marry a christian woman without previously renouncing the Mahometan faith. Alvarez demands an immediate abjuration of Hemeya, who finding that he must relinquish either his mistress or his religion, consents after a violent inward struggle

to become an apostate. At this critical moment, Malec, (Young) his old preceptor, who has been endeavouring to rouse the remains of his nation to reassert their independence, in the hope of placing the crown of his fathers on the head of Hemeya, arrives at Grenada. He employs the strong arguments of patriotism and honour to dissuade Hemeya from his purpose, and has nearly prevailed, when Florinda appears and fixes her hesitating lover. Malec, enraged by the effect of her charms on the mind of his pupil, advances to stab her, but her beauty unnerves his arm, and he drops the dagger at her feet. Hemeya retires with Alvarez to prepare for his abjuration; while Malec repairs to his friends, to acquaint them with the intended insurrection. They are interrupted by the sudden entrance of Hemeya, who advises Malec to fly, as the officers of the Inquisition are coming to seize him. The undaunted Moor commands his friends to withdraw from the danger, but though he has the same opportunity of escape, he, with more resolution than prudence remains to be taken himself. The servants of the inquisition headed by Pescara, force the gates; Malec is accused of having endeavoured to seduce a convert, meaning Hemeya, back to the Mahometan faith, but is informed that he may save his life by becoming a christian. The unhappy prince now perceives the artifice of his rival, who under the mask of friendship, had sent him with the warning to his preceptor. Malec is led off: Hemeya draws upon Pescara; they fight, but are separated by Florinda, who rushes between them, and the governor retires. Hemeya vows to save Malec or perish; and before he goes, he makes Florinda swear, that she will die rather than become the wife of Pescara. A train of inquisitors lead Malec in chains to execution: Hemeya follows in disguise, and with the assistance of the Moors rescues his preceptor from the stake. Malec and his friends fly from Grenada, with Florinda, while Hemeya, left alone to defend the pass and afford time for their escape, is overpowered. Florinda is retaken, and as the only means of saving the life of her lover, she consents, notwithstanding her

2Z *Eng. Mag.* Vol. I.

solemn vow, to become the wife of Pescara. The fifth act opens with an exquisitely beautiful moonlight view of Grenada, and the Moors, from the Alpuxerra mountains, hastening to rescue Hemeya. The scene changes to the prison; Florinda enters in bridal garments to free her lover, who spurns her when he learns that she has married his mortal enemy. Pescara follows his bride to the prison, and enraged at the affection which she breathes for Hemeya, orders him, in breach of his promise, to instant death. The executioners seize him: at this moment an alarm proclaims the success of the Moors. Pescara attempts to stab Florinda; Hemeya breaks loose, wrests the dagger from his grasp and plunges it into his heart. The Moors rush in: Hemeya's exultation is complete, till Florinda, pale and faint, declares that she had swallowed a deadly poison before she approached the altar. Hemeya in despair stabs himself, and Florinda sinks lifeless on the body of her lover.

That meritorious favourite of the public, Mr. John Kemble, is going through his principal characters, preparatory to his final farewell to the stage. On the 25th of April, he appeared for the last time in the part of the Stranger, and on the 8th of May in that of Penruddock. The 13th was fixed for his last representation of Hotspur in the play of Henry IV. but at the conclusion, the fire and energy of his performance produced an unanimous cry for his repetition of the character, and the promise of his re-appearance in it was hailed with a long-continued burst of acclamation. On the 15th he personated Cato, and on the 17th Brutus, for the last time.—*New Mon. Mag.* May 1817.

THE LADY MACLEAN, OF DUART.

SOME time since, a very interesting and popular little piece was brought out at our theatres, entitled *The Lady of the Rock*, and which, no doubt, many of our fair readers have witnessed with much feeling for the fate of the unhappy lady. The origin of this tale is literally taken from the history of the Highlands of Scotland; and the facts from which

the dramatist borrowed his story are as follow :—

In former times one of the Macleans, of Duart, married a sister of Argyle. This lady was amiable and beautiful, but unfortunately she had been married some years without producing an heir to the house of Duart, with whom her sterility was her crime; her husband hated her on this account, and resolved on her destruction. In order to screen himself from detection, he hired ruffians to convey her secretly to a bare rock near Lismore; and there she was left to perish at the coming up of the tide. Here the hapless lady sat watching the rolling tide which she expected every moment to overwhelm her; when fortunately she perceived a vessel sailing down the Sound of Mull, in the very direction of the rock on which she was sitting. She displayed every signal she could think of to attract the notice of the crew; and, at length, they perceived her, and drew near the rock. She soon made herself known, and informed them that it was by order of her barbarous husband she was left on the rock. The sailors, with that usual generosity belonging to mariners, took pity on her, received her on board, and conveyed her safely to her brother at Inverary.

Macleane of Duart made a grand mock funeral, and pretended deeply to lament his departed lady, whom he announced to have died suddenly. He wrote some very disconsolate letters to his relations, and particularly to Argyle, on whom he waited, after a decent time given to seclusion, clad in deep mourning; where, with the greatest shew of grief, he lamented to his brother-in-law the irreparable loss he had sustained. Argyle said nothing, but sent for his sister; whose appearance, blooming with health, acted as an electrical shock on the perfidious husband. Argyle was of a mild and peaceable disposition, and took no other revenge on Maclean than by commanding him instantly to quit his presence; at the same time advising him to keep out of the way of his brother Donald, who would, if he met him, certainly take his life for having attempted to destroy that of his sister. Sir Donald Campbell did meet him afterwards in the streets of Edinburgh, and stabbed him for the intended murder of his sister, when Maclean was eighty years of age. The Castle of Duart is now a heap of ruins on a promontory in Mull, and stands nearly opposite to the Ladys' Rock in the Island of Lismore.—*Le Belle As. May 1817.*

THE DRAMA.

From the European Magazine.

COVENT-GARDEN, JUNE 23, 1817.

WHEN the green curtain dropped this evening on the dramatic career of the most classic actor that ever graced a public stage, it fell like the awful shroud that separates departed worth from our noblest enjoyment.—We must calm our mind preparatory to our attempted last critique, by offering the following tribute to KENBLE's public memory.

Monarch of Art! in whose august domains
Colleagu'd with Genius soundest Judgment
reigns:

By Nature's hand with lib'ral bounty grac'd
And proudly fashion'd for the Throne of Taste:
'Twas thine to choose the nobler aim of Art,
To charm the eye—to agonize the heart—
To sweep the chords of grandeur—to retrace
The form of dignity, the flow of grace;
The Passions' wildest empire to controul,
And wield Expression's sceptre o'er the soul!

Mr. KENBLE is, we believe, in his sixtieth year; and although Time has visibly impaired his physical powers, we have still been per-

mitted to contemplate in him the glorious ruin of a majestic form irradiated by majestic moral energies; to read in his soul-inspired features the sublimity of SHAKESPEARE'S muse, as he has variously ennobled the Poet's hero and embodied the Poet's fancy.

The rapture of our admiration is not, however, licensed by prevailing taste; we will therefore endeavour to shew the distinction between those powers which respectively excite adventitious wonder and perpetual delight; and in so doing we borrow extracts from Dr. JOHNSON'S elaborate parallel of DRYDEN and POPE:

"The style of Dryden is capricious and varied; that of Pope is cautious and uniform. Dryden obtrudes the motions of his own mind; Pope constrains his mind to its own classic rules of composition. Dryden is sometimes vehement and rapid; Pope is always chaste and uniform. Dryden's page is a natural field, rising into inequalities, and diversified by the various exuberance of abundant vegetation; Pope's is a velvet lawn, shorn by the scythe, and levelled by the roller."

Now, notwithstanding this parallel discloses the genius of persons celebrated equally as poets and as scholars; and notwithstanding

their most able delineator; and it will be scarcely possible to descant on the taste, the elegance, and the harmony of the Poet, without combining the energy, the correctness, and the judgment of the Actor.

The pleasure with which we have paid our humble tribute to Mr. KEMBLE's dramatic career is mingled with a sensation of pain that we must bid a "long farewell to all his greatness—Othello's occupation's gone!" But although his "scenic hour be past," and

"his weak hand

"No more shall wave immortal SHAKESPEARE'S wand;"

yet, will the reflection of his genius cast a radiance around the theatric hemisphere; and like pure gold on which enamel has been wrought, the sterling ore will retain its value, although the enamel be worn away.

Mr. KEMBLE selected the character of *Coriolanus* as his last performance, and perhaps in no instance were gratification and affliction so closely blended. He portrayed the character of the noble Roman, with his usual excellence; and the cheering plaudits of his friends were as ardent as we ever witnessed; at the same time, regret was predominant in every bosom, that such talent would delight them no more.

THE DRAMA.

COVENT GARDEN, JUNE 5, 1817.

MRS. Siddons's appearance in *Lady Macbeth* drew immense crowds to every part of the house. We should suppose that more than half the number of persons were compelled to return without gaining admittance. We succeeded in gaining a seat in one of the back-boxes, and saw this wonderful performance at a distance, and consequently at a disadvantage. Though the distance of place is a disadvantage to a performance like Mrs. Siddons's *Lady Macbeth*, we question whether the distance of time at which we have formerly seen it is any. It is nearly twenty years since we first saw her in this character, and certainly the impression which we have still left on our minds from that first exhibition, is stronger than the one we now received. The sublimity of Mrs. Siddons's acting is such, that the first impulse which it gives to the mind can never wear out, and we doubt whether this original and paramount impression is not weakened, rather than strengthened, by subsequent impressions. We do not read the tragedy of the

Robbers twice; if we have seen Mrs. Siddons in *Lady Macbeth* only once, it is enough. The impression is stamped there forever, and any after-experiments and critical inquiries only serve to fritter away and tamper with the sacredness of the early recollection. We see into the details of the character, its minute excellencies or defects, but the great masses, the gigantic proportions, are in some degree lost upon us by custom and familiarity. It is the first blow that staggers us; by gaining time we recover our self-possession. Mrs. Siddons's *Lady Macbeth* is little less appalling in its effects than the apparition of a preternatural being, but if we were accustomed to see a preternatural being constantly, our astonishment would, by degrees diminish. We do not know whether it is owing to the cause here stated, or to a falling off in Mrs. Siddons's acting, but we certainly thought her performance inferior to what it used to be. She speaks too slow, and her manner has not that decided, sweeping majesty, which used to characterize her as the Muse of Tragedy herself. Some-

C. G. G.

thing of apparent indecision is perhaps attributable to the circumstance of her only acting at present on particular occasions. An actress who appears only once a year cannot play so well as if she was in the habit of acting once a week.—*Examiner*.

MR. KEAN, IN DUBLIN.

THE announcement of Mr. Kean brought one of the most crowded houses this season. It was absolutely crammed. We own we were glad, independently of the pleasure which we always feel when talent is honoured, at the view of the house last night. We really thought that the people of Dublin were stolen away by the ears—that they were music mad, and that they had not a soul for the severer beauties of Tragedy. But we rejoice to find that they only want the proper attraction—and that they know how to value, as becomes themselves and him, the performance of such an actor as Mr. Kean.

His *entré* was greeted, as might be easily expected, with the most enthusiastic welcome; and his first speech, given with familiar and original boldness, was applauded to the echo that should applaud again. The eyes of this man are truly magical. Those in a remote part of the Theatre, who are not blest with strong sight, can have no idea what wonders he does with the piercing, rapid alteration of this organ. It is the glass of Banquo. All the passions in the royalty of nature, appear and vanish on its changing surface. It begins to speak before the lips move, and it occasionally belies the language of the lips. Hence the pauses, which, to those who can see the outline of the face alone, appear sometimes uncalled for, or contrary to the ordinary reading of the text, when accompanied with the pregnant comment of the eye become in a moment natural, forcible, and striking. His eye is like a sudden beam of light upon a hidden truth. You do not expect it in any parti-

cular spot, but, when thrown into strong relief by an adventitious ray, you instantly acknowledge its presence and its power. We do not mean by any means to defend Mr. Kean's Readings. Nay, we think some of them erroneous—but we feel persuaded, that, if the eye is watched—if the labouring soul is followed through all the workings of his countenance, much of that censure which has been lavished upon Mr. Kean's New Readings, as they are called, must vanish. One thing, however, should be recollected, that, though these readings occasionally "bring down" plaudits, they are only the secondary beauties of Mr. Kean's performance. If they were all omitted—though we should miss some peculiarities, *Richard*, in Mr. Kean's personation, would be as effective as it is. In fact, it is this peculiarity that has given Mr. Kean such sway and masterdom in his profession—it is the pervading mind—it is the vigour and the soul which pervades and inspires the man—the *mens agitat molem*—the living and exhaustless light—the fire in his heart, and the fire in his brain, which glows with such intenseness, and shines out with such brilliancy—these are the secrets of Mr. Kean's success; and, when another actor shall be so fortunate as to find them, he may calculate on the same renown.

We have left ourselves no place for particular criticism. Nor, indeed, is it necessary. We are all familiar with Mr. Kean's *Richard*, and should only repeat what has been said a thousand times by an induction of particulars. Suffice it to say, then, that it was bloody, bold, and dangerous—that the sarcasms were given with infinite bitterness, and the hypocrisy maintained with consummate address. But it is in the fire, and stir, and bustle of the piece that Mr. Kean, to use a familiar term, is at home—that he blazes, and burns, and goes out at length, like a Volcano, with an explosion that is tremendous.—*Dublin Paper*, July 1, 1817.